

A NEW  
LIFE OF JESUS.

BY

DAVID FRIEDRICH STRAUSS.

~~Authorized~~ ~~Translator.~~

IN TWO VOLUMES:

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## Inscribed

TO THE MEMORY OF MY DEAR BROTHER,  
WILLIAM STRAUSS.

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MY DEAR BROTHER,

OLD as now begins to be my career as an author, the present work is the first, with the exception of two letters, to which I have affixed a dedication. Patrons I never had nor sought for: my instructors—as soon as umbrage was taken at my first work—hastened, in strict conformity with truth, to disavow the cause of offence, namely, the best information that I possessed, as something not of their teaching; and as for the friends and companions of my studies, these I had the mortification of seeing exposed to so much suspicion and annoyance from their merely rumoured intimacy with me (so far as they refused to sacrifice it, as some did, to circumstances), that it became a point of conscientious duty not to expose them to still greater odium by a public memorial of our friendship.

\* Towards the close of the year 1862, soon after the present treatise was commenced, the lively interest taken in it by my only brother, a retired manufacturer of Cologne, suggested the thought of inscribing it with his name; and so, as the idea struck me, I hastily committed to paper the following Dedication. A few months later, on the 21st February, 1863, he suddenly fell a victim to his malady, without having ever heard of what I had reserved as a little surprise for him; but his death alters not my desire and my duty to declare publicly the relation in which he stood to myself and to my labours, and so let this Dedication, originally intended as a greeting to the living, remain as an invocation to the dead.

You, dear brother, are independent—exempted by the happy privilege of commercial pursuits from any solicitude as to the favour or displeasure of spiritual or lay superiors; the appearance of your name on the foremost pages of a book of mine can do you no injury. And then not only have you supported your brother by standing faithfully at his side in many a trying crisis—you have also done for the writer in your single person all that could possibly be done by patron, teacher, or friend. You have encouraged, and, what is more, you have understood me; often have you cheered my flagging spirits, and recalled my truant attention to the theme to which it was first devoted; in the composition of this treatise more especially you have been present to my thoughts from the very first, and not a page has been written without an anxious wish to satisfy what I knew to be your own conception of the specific requirements of the age.

And here the dedication of the book coincides with its destination as announced by the title. In dedicating it to my brother, I consider him as a representative of the people, believing that among the German people for whom the book is destined, there are many like himself; many who find their best solace after a day of toil in serious reading; many possessing the exceptional courage to disregard the beaten track of conventional and ecclesiastical routine, and to think for themselves on the most important objects of human concernment; I may add—the still rarer capacity of seeing that there is no security, in Germany at least, for political liberty and progress, until the public mind has been emancipated from superstition, and initiated in a purely human culture.

## DEDICATION.

Whether a view of the universe which, disclaiming supernatural aids, leaves man to himself and to the natural order of the world, be one really suited to the people and to the uses of actual life,—whether it be able, not only to keep a man in the right path while prosperous, but to preserve him erect and cheerful in adversity,—you, my dear brother, have had but too many opportunities, especially in the last of the two supposed cases, of ascertaining by experience. You have manfully held out against a tedious illness without any adventitious crutch, relying on that alone which you are able to be and to know as man and member of this divinely teeming world;—under circumstances which might have made the steadiest quail and shaken the strongest faith, you retained your courage and self-possession; not even in moments when hope failed and life was despaired of did you give way to the self-delusion of discounting futurity.

May a serene life's-evening be allotted you after so many severe trials; may this volume satisfy your indulgence, and this dedication not displease you; may it certify to our children and children's children the close spiritual intimacy of their fathers, and the faith in which, without any pretension either to sanctity or saintly beatitude, they at least lived honourably and tranquilly died!

## PREFACE.

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IN the Preface to the First Edition of my former *Life of Jesus*, written now twenty-nine years ago, I particularly mentioned that the work was intended for theologians; that for others no adequate preparation had been made, so that the book was purposely thrown into a form unsuited for lay comprehension. On the present occasion I write especially for the use of laymen, and have taken particular pains that no single sentence shall be unintelligible to any educated or thoughtful person; whether professional theologians also choose to be among my readers is to me a matter of indifference.

So greatly have things changed during the interval! The general public can now no longer be considered unprepared for inquiries of this nature. Independently of any act of mine, these questions were rashly thrown before the multitude by my bitterest adversaries, the very men who insisted that, in decency, I ought at least to have written in Latin. The loud outcries of these advocates of caution were repeated by persons less scrupulous than myself, and treated in a popular, though to me not very palatable form; until at length the political resuscitation of Germany opened a freer platform for religious as well as other discussions. In consequence of this, many minds have become unsettled in their attachment to old ideas, and roused to independent thought upon religious subjects; while at the same time a variety of preliminary conceptions, which could not be reckoned on as familiar at the time of the publication of my first work, have since become popularly

current. Moreover, it is a mere prejudice of caste to fancy that ability to comprehend these things appertains exclusively to the theologian or man of learning. On the contrary, the essence of the matter is so simple, that every one whose head and heart are in the right place may well rest assured that whatever, after due reflection and the proper use of accessible means, still remains incomprehensible to him, is in itself of very little value.

Again, the interval has made it perfectly clear that professional theologians are precisely those from whom an unprejudiced judgment in these matters is least to be expected. They are in fact interested parties adjudicating their own cause. Any discussion as to the objects of Christian faith as traditionally given, especially as to the Gospel records which are its basis, seems to imply a doubt as to the propriety of the estimation in which they are held as spiritual leaders. Whether rightly or wrongly is immaterial; such they believe to be the case. And to every class or caste its own stability is the first consideration; few indeed among its members would encourage innovations menacing its own safety. And clearly, so soon as Christianity ceases to be thought miraculous, the clergy must cease to seem the miraculously gifted persons they have hitherto represented themselves. Their business will rather be to teach than to confer benedictions, and every one knows that the former office is as difficult and thankless as the latter is remunerative and easy.

In order, then, to make any advance in religious matters, it behoves those theologians who are above professional prejudices and interests to brave the singularity of extending their hand to the thoughtful among the laity. We must address the people, since theologians refuse to listen; as of old the Apostle Paul turned to the Gentiles when the Jews rejected his teaching. And when the better-informed among the people shall have ceased to relish the mental food generally proffered to them by the clergy, the latter will begin to

bethink themselves of providing a better kind of nutriment. But external pressure must be applied to them; just as it had to be resorted to in regard to lawyers of the old school in order to induce them to adopt trial by jury, and other similar reforms. Certain gentlemen will, I know, here insinuate something about theologians of an obsolete class, who now wish to re-appear in the character of spiritual demagogues. Be it so! Mirabeau too was an obsolete nobleman who held out his hand to the people: and truly the act was not barren of result. I, who am no Mirabeau, have a compensation in being able to look back with a clearer conscience to the past, especially to the particular act which caused me to be proscribed by my adopted profession.

This destination for the use of the people is one of the reasons why, instead of a new edition of the old "Life of Jesus," I put forth an entirely new work, in which nothing of the old, except the fundamental ideas, is to be found. Another circumstance, however, led in the same direction. I had long wished to avail myself of the opportunity of a new edition to bring my book to the level of recent inquiries on the subject, and, while defending its general position against objections, to amend and enrich it with the results of later discovery, whether made by myself or others. But I soon found that the former work, whose chief import consisted in its having preceded such discoveries, would be altered—nay, altogether destroyed in its most characteristic peculiarities—by undergoing such a revision; and this were a pity. For in its actual condition it remains an historical memorial of an important era in modern theology; and its plan must for some time to come make it a useful manual for learners. Let the old "Life of Jesus" then continue in its present shape; and should ever a new edition of the now exhausted work seem to be wanted, I have provided by will that it shall be made in accordance with the first, adopting some few corrections from the fourth edition.



In order, then, to incorporate the results of recent investigation, it became necessary to do so, so far as was possible, in the more popular work. And there was no difficulty in doing this, provided learned details were omitted. The omission is a loss in some respects, but in others a gain, inasmuch as in this way the necessity of learned excuses and pretences is excluded. One such pretence is the assurance so often met with in the writings of scientific free-thinkers, that a purely historical interest constitutes the whole gist of their inquiries. With every respect for the word of the learned gentlemen, I beg to affirm that what they tell us is not possible, and would be no credit to them if it were. The motives of a man who writes about the Assyrian Kings or the Egyptian Pharaohs may doubtless be purely historical; but Christianity is so living a power, and the problem as to its origin so rife in important consequences to the immediate present, that the student must be literally stupid whose interest in the determination of such a question can be strictly confined to the historical.

This, however, is indisputable;—he to whom the conceptions, patronised by churches and by the prevalent theology, as to the supernatural character and concatenation of the circumstances of the life of Jesus, have become intolerable, will find his best means of effectual release in historical inquiry. For having adopted the fundamental conviction that everything that happens, or ever happened, happened naturally,—that even the most distinguished of men was still man, and that, consequently, the supernatural colouring in the accounts of early Christianity must be adventitious and unreal, he is induced to expect that the more exactly he can trace the true course of events, the more their natural character will appear; in short, his tendencies lead him towards historical inquiry, though always under the control of strict historical criticism. So far I agree with these gentlemen, and they in the main with me; our great and common aim is not so much to re-

suscitate an obliterated history, as to assist the human mind in emancipating itself from the oppressive thralldom of creeds ; and I fully coincide in thinking historical inquiry, together with general philosophical education, to be the best means of effecting this object.

With the pretence of a purely historical interest is moreover connected a reservation, preventing the inquiry from going its full length and reaching its proper goal. It is not asked what Jesus really said or did, but only what the reporters make him say or do ; not what a given evangelical narrative portends in itself, but only what the narrator meant or desired under certain circumstances and with certain tendencies peculiar to himself. In this way we have to do with the Evangelists alone, and the Lord is left out of sight : just as constitutional governments throw responsibility on ministries and exempt the crown. This is certainly a prudent provision against fanatical assaults, and it is also quite right that preliminary critical difficulties should be thoroughly sifted ; but it is not enough. What we especially want to know is this : is the Gospel history true and reliable as a whole and in its details, or is it not ? Only in connection with this vital problem can these preliminary inquiries have a general interest.

In this respect the Gospel criticism of the last twenty years has certainly somewhat run to seed. New hypotheses about the three first Gospels more especially, their sources, objects, authorship, and mutual relation, follow each other so rapidly, and are asserted and attacked with such eagerness, that we almost forget there is anything else to be considered ; and the controversy threatens to be so endless, that we begin to despair of ever arriving at a clear understanding as to the main problem, if its solution is really to be deferred until all these matters have been settled.

Luckily this is unnecessary. In regard to the fourth Gospel and its relation to the others, it is certainly most important

to come to a clear understanding before venturing to say a single word upon these subjects; but we may see our way clearly upon many of the most essential points of the Gospel history, without being able to say positively whether Matthew wrote in Hebrew or in Greek; whether he wrote a Gospel, or a mere collection of sayings or discourses; whether Luke had before him both Mark and Matthew, or whether Mark found Luke as well as Matthew ready to his hand. Above all, we are enabled to form a very decided opinion, quite independently of these and similar questions, as to what the Gospel history *is not*. And this negation is for our object, which is prospective, and not merely retrospective and historical, a principal, if not the sole consideration. It consists in this—that in the person and acts of Jesus no supernaturalism shall be suffered to remain; nothing which shall press upon the souls of men with the leaden weight of arbitrary, inscrutable authority. We can, I say, come to a clear issue in regard to this negation, independently of those endless critical questions; for we can plainly perceive this, that no single Gospel, nor all the Gospels together, can claim that degree of historical reliability which would be required in order to make us debase our reason to the point of believing miracles.

The affirmative counterpart to this negation is twofold: first, the notion to be entertained as to the person, objects, and true history of Jesus; secondly, the mode in which the unhistorical portion of the narrative about him originated. In order to be able to give a satisfactory answer to these questions, it is doubtless necessary to know what part of the description of Christ, given by each of the Evangelists, is his own gratuitous addition, and whence he derived it. This again cannot be known until the aims and means, the external as well as internal conditions of their literary activity, have been thoroughly investigated. This is far more than has been yet attained; still it is allowable, nay desirable, that from time to time a census should be taken of results,

separating what has been established as certain or probable, from doubtful or improbable conjecture. The attention of all parties is thus recalled to the main issue; and such reminders, by concentrating the thoughts, are always advantageous to science.

As to myself, I adhere to my original position, while at the same time endeavouring to avail myself of the results of later investigations. For this end I have tried to learn from all who, since the first appearance of my "Life of Jesus," have occupied a conspicuous place in criticism on the subject; and no one will be able to reproach me with the sin of literary "Pilatism,"—the term given by the Swiss to Godsched's obstinate insistence on every word he had once written. To Baur and his followers I owe the greater part of the new information I have gained; and if unable to agree with all their results, I heartily sympathise with the method and tone of their inquiries; while on the other hand, as regards the party opposed to them, though availing myself of particular results, I consider, as I always did, their general aim and mode of proceeding mistaken. The former class of critics will, I hope, not think it disrespectful, if, in a work like the present, I treat many of the matters forming the subject of their inquiries with indifference: as to the others, I know very well what sort of reception I have to expect, and stand prepared for every sort of demonstration of ill-will, from supercilious silence and scornful disparagement, down to accusations of blasphemy and sacrilege. And the book being dedicated to the German people, I already foresee the counter protestations which will be raised in the name of the German people, by those who have assuredly no authority to speak on their behalf.

I look upon the German people as the people of the Reformation; of the Reformation considered not as a transaction already finished in the past, but as a work to be carried on and progressively accomplished in the future. To this progressive

accomplishment, the culture of the present age tends as surely and unmistakeably as that of four centuries ago. We behold a crisis accompanied now as then by the painful conviction that, though Christianity be in the main indispensable, a part of what passes under its name has become absolutely intolerable. The old Reformation had an advantage in this, that what then appeared intolerable, appertained wholly to the doctrines and practice of the Church, while the Bible, and an ecclesiastical discipline simplified according to its dictates, provided what seemed a satisfactory substitute. The operation of sifting and separation was easy; and the Bible continuing an unquestioned treasure of revelation and salvation to the people, the crisis, though violent, was not dangerous. Now, on the contrary, that which then remained as the stay of Protestants, the Bible itself, with its history and its teaching, is called in question; the sifting process has now to be applied to its own pages, and we have to distinguish between that part of it which is true and valid for all time, and that which, depending on casual and temporary circumstances, has now become useless or pernicious. And even that which now remains valid and obligatory for ourselves is no longer so considered because it is supernaturally revealed to us in the Bible, but because it is seen to be true in itself, because reason and experience shew it to be imperishably established in the laws and constitution of our nature.

Indispensable, but also imperishable, remains that part of Christianity, by which it raised human nature above the sensual religion of Greece on one hand, and Jewish legalism on the other; on one side, that is, the belief that the world is governed by a spiritual and moral Power; on the other, the perception that the service of such a Being can only be like himself, namely, a moral and spiritual one, a worship of the disposition and the heart. We can indeed scarcely contemplate the latter element as constituting a continuing remnant among us of the old Christianity; since in a real and

true sense it has never yet been generally established. Even the Protestant Christianity of the day remains attached to outward acts, which, though in themselves not more valuable than the ceremonies of the Jews, are yet esteemed essential to salvation. And if we inquire how such heterogeneous elements could have mingled with the religion of Jesus, and have been retained in it, we shall find the cause to be the very same as that which to us constitutes the chief offence of all ancient religion, namely, belief in the miraculous. So long as Christianity is considered as something given from without, its Author as literally heaven-descended, the Church as a machinery for procuring the expiation of human offences through his blood, Christianity, though claiming to be the religion of the Spirit, must remain unspiritual, and in fact Jewish. Only when it is seen that in Christianity man did but become more deeply conscious of his own true nature, that Jesus was the individual in whom this deeper consciousness first became a supreme all-pervading influence, that redemption means but the advent of such a disposition and its inward adoption as our very life-blood, then only is Christianity really and thoroughly understood.

There exists in our time a vague presentiment that this, and this alone, is the true and abiding essence of Christianity, that all else is fume and husk, perishable and half perished already. It is a truth often divined by simple minds in the lower classes of society, and as often, with much else that is good and beautiful, a secret to the high and mighty. Indeed, the close association in which the two component parts of Christianity are placed in the sacred writings, expose many a mind to the risk of losing the essence with the husk, or at least to an irritating struggle, and dangerous perplexity between unbelief and morbid faith, between fanaticism and the laxity of indifferentism. To come to the aid of this helpless bewilderment is the duty of every one who feels the ability to do so. But the only mode of doing so is to mark out

clearly the line separating the abiding elements of Christianity—the genuine and saving truths—from the products of transient opinion. The line so drawn becomes a rent cleaving through the centre of the sacred writings, which is as much as to say through the heart of many an excellent Christian. Yet the rending of the heart has been esteemed an act of meritorious devotion; and this time it may be got over, at the expense of a slight headache and a little application of the reason. He to whom it has once occurred that man and all that belongs to him, religion not excepted, is historically developed, must see that within this development there can be no absolute perfection; he must acknowledge that the conceptions put forth under very unfavourable circumstances, in the religious writings of more than fifteen centuries ago, cannot now be taken as literally identical with our own, and that in order to make them presently available a separation of essentials from accessories is indispensable.

To effect this separation is now the proper task of Protestantism, and of the German people as leaders and pioneers of Protestantism. To this the efforts now made here and there in Germany in the direction of freer forms of church discipline can only be considered as preliminary. Considered in this light, they are matter of congratulation; but to suppose that nothing more remains to be done were a fatal error. Folly or knavery lurks in the pretence now circulated, that not dogma, or the contest of rationalism with supernaturalism, but only the life of the Church, is the proper business of our time. For church government is but the vehicle or form of a certain Christian substance: in order to know the aptest form, you must consider well the character of your Christianity, whether it be something natural or supernatural; for a supernatural religion of mysteries and sacramental graces necessarily brings with it an order of priests elevated above the congregation. *He who would banish priests from the Church must first banish miracles from religion.*

In calling upon the German nation to enter upon this enterprise, I by no means withdraw them from politics, but only indicate the safest and most effectual way of solving the political problem. For as the Reformation, engendered out of the peculiar characteristics of the German nation, has set its stamp upon them for all time, so it is certain that no national enterprise can have a chance of success which is unconnected with the Reformation,—which does not essentially grow out of their intellectual and moral culture. We Germans can be politically free only in proportion as we have made ourselves spiritually, morally, and religiously free. And what is it which ever disconcerts the efforts of our people to effect a united Germany, which makes the separation of north and south, untoward enough in itself, into a dangerous and festering ulcer, but the difference of Confessions,—the unhappy circumstance that the progress of the Reformation was violently arrested in the midst of its career, or rather robbed of the fruits of a success which was already on the point of accomplishment? And yet both sides have long been fully aware that as matters now stand neither can possibly succeed in winning over the other; that the sole possibility of re-union consists in the discovery of a third position elevated above both the rival parties. This higher position the German nation can never reach until it be initiated into the internal essence of religion, and emancipated from those external accessories which form the root of confessional distinctions. The so-called German Catholicism on one side, on the other the Protestant associations of “Lichtfreunde,”\*—already beginning to unite with one another in free religious communities,—are praiseworthy efforts tending to this end: a speculative contribution to this practical object will, it is hoped, be found in the present work.

In this view it offers the hand of fellowship to the French

\* Friends of Light.



one of Renan. Whatever complaints may be urged against this now famous work, it is certain that a book which on its first issue was condemned by I know not how many Bishops, and by the Roman Court itself, must necessarily be a work of merit. It has its faults, but only one fundamental error; this I trust its gifted author will recognise, and rectify his work accordingly. Whatever else may seem to us as faults are partly what in its native country will be esteemed as merits contributing to its circulation; while, on the contrary, several peculiarities by which the author of the present work hopes to earn the approbation of his own countrymen will on the other side of the Rhine cause displeasure or weariness. I joyfully hailed the work of Renan on its appearance, when my own was nearly completed, as the sign of a generally felt want; on closer acquaintance I accept it respectfully, and though by no means tempted by its example to alter my own plan, I may say that all I wish is to have written a book as suitable for Germany as Renan's is for France.

THE AUTHOR.

## NOTE BY THE TRANSLATOR.

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IF the translator avails himself of the usual privilege of adding a word on his own account, it can only be for the purpose of summarily reiterating what is said by the author, both in his preface and elsewhere, as to the essential nature of Christianity. For if this be distinctly understood, if it be clearly seen to consist in little, if anything, more than intrinsic goodness—goodness not enforced artificially from without, but flowing naturally from a pure heart and disposition replete with love to God and man—then there is an end to perplexity and anxiety about extrinsic, unessential, and doubtful accessories, about metaphysical niceties of creed, miraculous narratives, and ecclesiastical mystifications. If, as once said by high authority, it be the mission of English men and women to “teach all nations,” surely it ought to be one of their first duties to teach themselves, and especially to gain correct notions as to the nature of the religion which they would impart to others.

Freedom, Christianity, Mythology, are, after all, but ill understood in England, and the prevalent errors about them may be traced to the same cause. The cause is the mistaking the external for the internal. If freedom be thought to consist in external adjustments or protestations rather than in the quality and culture of the soul; if mythology, instead of being

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# INTRODUCTION.

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ON THE IDEA OF A LIFE OF JESUS.

GOSPEL SOURCES AND CHARACTERISTICS.

# INTRODUCTION.

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## 1. ON THE IDEA OF A LIFE OF JESUS.

AT a comparatively early day we already meet with the term "Life of Jesus," and with writings passing under this or a similar title; nevertheless, what we now understand by this phrase is an idea emphatically modern.

The Church, whether Protestant or Catholic, possessed a life of Christ only in the form of its two doctrines, that of Christ's person, and that relating to his work or office; the first explaining what he is and was as incarnate Son of God, in order to be enabled to do what was required for the restoration of fallen man; the other detailing the particulars of what, in this capacity, he did and still does for us. Such particulars, so far as belonging to the past and to his earthly career, were certainly a part of his life, or, if you will, his whole life was a superhuman redeeming activity; still, even when so understood and related, it appears under an aspect quite different from that in which the circumstances of a human life are usually considered for the purposes of biography. Such, however, so long as Church theology prevailed, was the view adopted; accounts of the Redeemer's life were only paraphrases or combinations of Scripture passages confirmatory or illustrative of Church dogma,—not what we now understand by a life or history of Jesus.

The hero of a biography, according to modern conceptions, should be entirely and clearly human. A personage half human, half divine, may figure plausibly enough in poetry and fable, but is never at the present day seriously

chosen as the subject of historical narrative. The human hero of a biography is a being partly natural, partly spiritual; one, whose lower impulses and selfish aims ought in duty to be held in subordination to the universal law of reason, not one whose tendencies are already and necessarily so controlled in consequence of a union of humanity and divinity. Hesitation and failure, struggles between the senses and the reason, between selfish and general aims, are incidental to every human life; and although the disturbance arising from this inward warfare may vary infinitely in degree, from the wildest tumult of the passions to the most insignificant interruption of their repose, still its absolute exclusion, as supposed in the Church doctrine as to the sinlessness of Christ, must be fatal to any true conception of humanity.

Moreover, even the most highly gifted of human individuals is always influenced by the conditions of the particular circle in which he lives and moves. He belongs to a special family, age, and nation; his soul, however independent and self-centred, is fed on the one hand, and on the other limited by the nature and degree of the culture so derived; his aims are swayed by surrounding circumstances, and are hence exposed not only to obstructions in their execution, but also to indefinite modifications and improvements resulting from maturer experience. But the divinely begotten Son or incarnate Word of traditional belief is under no such restriction. His original endowment needs no human teaching, being entirely and absolutely independent of limiting conditions of family or nation; his aims, or rather the single aim to fulfil which he is sent into the world, is pre-appointed from eternity, and carried out with inevitable persistency and certainty, apart from any of the usual influences of social life, or even of the laws of nature.

In all biographies, influences of the above kind are a matter of course. The hero is a finite individual, whose force is limited by other surrounding forces acting according to

natural laws. The alternate play of such forces is the proper subject of history, whose fundamental law is that of causality; in virtue of which every effect is assumed to have a natural and assignable motive; the introduction of a heterogeneous supernatural initiative into the wheel-work inevitably breaks its continuity, and makes history impossible.

In all these respects the Church conception of Christ is irreconcilably at variance with the idea of history in general and that of biography in particular. In the attempt to give to that conception a biographical form, we see at once that form and matter refuse to coalesce. The Christ of the Church is no subject for biographical narrative, and the idea of making it one is not only modern but self-contradictory. The two sides of which it consists—dogma and history—were developed separately, the attempt to combine them being first made in the eighteenth century. A tendency to blend incongruities is characteristic of an age of transition. Men wished to retain the Christ of the Church, but felt that they could do so only by adapting to the prescribed outline the familiar forms of actual life; and thus the discordant elements, human and divine, the matter and the mode of treatment, became virtually decomposed, betraying their intrinsic disharmony in the vain effort to unite them.

And so the conception of a life of Christ was ominous of coming change. It anticipated the broad results of modern theological development. It lay as a snare in the path of the latter, prognosticating in its special incompatibilities the general disruption of traditional belief. It was as a pit into which theology was inevitably destined to fall and to become extinguished. When the biography was seriously taken up, the fate of the theological conception was sealed; if the latter was to survive, the biography should never have been attempted. But the attempt was inevitable. If antiquity held it becoming to treat nothing human as alien to humanity,

the watchword of modern times is to regard everything as alien and irrelevant which is not natural and human. The significance of Christ in relation to modern times could only be substantiated by making his career biographically intelligible, and by treating his life as a pragmatistical sequence of events on the same footing as that of other illustrious men.

Of the danger inseparable from such a mode of treating the subject there was no presentiment at first. It was thought to be a merely trifling concession, involving no change in regard to essentials. And then there was comfort in the assurance that whatever became of dogmatical Christology, the Christ of the New Testament was at all events safe. It was imagined that the latter was quite natural and human if rightly interpreted and understood. But what if this were not the case; if the Christ of the New Testament, though in some respects dissimilar, substantially agreed with the theological or dogmatical conception in its miraculous representations of his nature and acts? The New Testament is the only existing source of all that we particularly know about Jesus. If in this sole documentary authority he appears under a form incompatible with biography, then, a biography being required at our hands, it becomes imperatively necessary that the authority should be proved, *i.e.* tried and measured by the general standard of human probabilities. And thus, as the dogmatic treatment of the Life of Jesus inevitably passed into the pragmatistical, so the pragmatistical necessarily advanced a stage onward to the critical. Only when this latter operation had been completed by a full and unsparing investigation into the credibility of the Gospel accounts, could the idea of a pragmatistical biography be honestly entertained; and even then only within very unpretentious and modest limits, if it turned out that the Gospel materials, when critically tested, dwindled under the process down to a faint and hesitating outline.



## 2. VARIOUS FORMS OF THE ATTEMPT TO WRITE A LIFE OF JESUS. HESS.

The labours now for more than a hundred years successively directed to the construction of Lives of Jesus, form a series of efforts to bring the two conflicting elements of the idea above alluded to into harmony. But the issue of these attempts, each more unfortunate than the other, only proves the impossibility of such a union, and the consequent necessity of a critical sifting of the documents. It is impossible here to follow step by step this process of development or rather decomposition; yet it is necessary to note its principal stages as indicated in certain eminently distinguished efforts of the kind, especially as the operation will tend to exhibit the reasons and necessary connection of my former work with the present.

One of the earliest, and if long continued popularity may warrant the saying so, one of the happiest attempts to give to the evangelical narrative a biographical form, was that of J. J. Hess of Zurich. First published in 1768, it has since re-appeared in various editions down to the present century, and was a favourite book with our sires. Hess cherished the belief that, with a slight measure of concession on the part of orthodoxy, the Gospel narrative might be made to harmonise admirably with the requisitions of biography. His fundamental theory is that of supernaturalism; the divine element of the Gospels is fully recognised; the entrance of Jesus into the world, his exit, his nature, are all superhuman; of his miracles none are curtailed. But Hess having in his preface declared his purpose to construct, not a mere work of religious edification or antiquarianism, but a history of the most instructive and pleasing kind, imagines that without detracting from the divine character of Christ, it remains still within his power to represent him as eminently human, to treat his

history as an intelligible series of events explicable from physical and moral causes. He thinks the same mode of treatment applicable even to the miracles; since we have to consider not merely their supernatural cause, but also the moral motives for working them; their true worth consisting not merely in their extraordinary or inexplicable nature, but quite as much in their moral characteristics, as manifesting divine goodness and benevolence.

It also marks the spirit of the age which witnessed the first efforts of our modern poetical literature, that in addition to the moral characteristics of the Gospel narrative, attention was called to its æsthetic beauty and mastery over the feelings. Hess, for instance, considers the miracles of the infancy and those of the public life of Jesus, as having equal claims to historical credibility; but he particularly dwells on the appropriateness of the virgin birth as in itself, independently of its historic truth, the most dignified mode of introducing the Son of God into the world; adding that no one possessing sense and taste can read the account of the angelic vision to the Bethlehemite shepherds without recognising this mode of announcement as one of especial suitability and surpassing beauty.

It is impossible, even for the most orthodox, to avoid applying a certain amount of critical discrimination to the Gospels, since we have before us four different lives of Jesus, each to a certain extent parallel to the other, yet often with varying and differently arranged circumstances; and again, sometimes containing conflicting statements, many of which are individually peculiar to the several writers. In such cases Hess naturally tries to be as conservative as possible; he throws into forced union the inconsistent accounts of the infancy given by Matthew and Luke, distinguishes the nobleman of Capernaum in John from the centurion in Matthew, the supper of the washing of the feet from that of the institution of the Eucharist: but then he is unable to

admit two cleansings of the temple, although the one narrated by John occurs at the first visit to Jerusalem, that of the other Evangelists at the last and only visit. There he naively makes John yield the preference to Matthew, though without the least suspicion as to the authenticity of either narrative.

Yet, however decided the author's belief in the miraculous, we may here and there observe a passage in some unobtrusive corner in which his faith seems tainted with rationalism. To the star of the wise men, he says, he would rather give the general name of meteor; it is not, however, generality which he really has in view, but rather the greater probability attained by the narrative of the star's "going before" and "standing over" the house, by placing it in a lower region of the air. But it is especially in his view of Satan and the devil in which Hess betrays rationalistic influences. In his account of the temptation he begins by speaking of the "tempter," omitting any particular description of his person,\* only in the second act of the drama suddenly introducing the name Satan. But since the object ascribed to the "tempter" is that of discovering whether Jesus was really the Son of God, as announced at his baptism—a fact which, according to the Bible, Satan must know, and only a human opponent, such as a Pharisee, could doubt—one readily sees how Hess in this instance involuntarily betrays a rationalistic leaning.

To this leaning he abandons himself entirely in his statements as to demoniacal possession. He professes to give no opinion as to the cause of this anomalous condition, confining himself to a careful description of the symptoms. It seems to him of comparatively little moment whether these were originated naturally or preternaturally, because in either case the miracle is equally great, nor can any blame attach to the Evangelists, who make no pretension to be natural

\* In the Tübingen Ed., 1779.

philosophers, if they recount these phenomena as they received them from popular belief. Hess, therefore, always speaks of possession as a malady commonly ascribed to the influence of bad spirits; as to the case of Mary Magdalen, out of whom seven devils are said to have been cast, we can here, he says, form no clear conception as to the nature of the malady, possibly because it consisted in a combination of many several disorders of the kind usually ascribed to the influence of evil spirits. Now certainly such influences are irreconcilable with that natural connection of cause and effect which, for the purposes of history and biography, must needs be assumed; but scepticism was only in its infancy, suggesting as yet no misgiving as to how far a direct rivalry and collision with the powers of darkness formed an essential ingredient of the character of Christ as given in the Church estimate or that of the New Testament. Moreover, no biography can properly deal with the circumstances of a hero whose thoughts and plans transcend the beginnings of the world; Hess, therefore, while allowing pretensions of this nature, as claimed by the Jesus of the fourth Gospel, to subsist in the form of Scripture paraphrase, prefers, when speaking in his own person, to insist on the opposed Socinian theory of a subsequent exaltation of Jesus on account of his earthly merits; thus clearly evincing a rationalistic tendency which would necessarily spread farther, eventually absorbing the entire circumstances of the Life of Jesus.

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### 3. HERDER.

The writings of Herder mark a considerable advance in the development we are here tracing. His treatises on the "Redeemer of Mankind as represented by the Three First Gospels" (A.D. 1796), and on "The Son of God, the Saviour of the World, according to John's Gospel" (1797), here claim notice. The effects of the formidable attack made on

the Bible and Christianity in the Wolfenbüttel Fragments, had been deeply felt; and Lessing's disquisitions on the subject had already placed the whole controversy on a higher footing. A mind like Herder's saw easily that the divine character of Jesus could no longer be maintained on the former basis of implicit belief in the truth of the Gospel narrative; but his dealings with these subjects were too fugitive to allow of his attaining a new satisfactory position in regard to them; the tendency to distinguish accurately was too much overpowered in his mind by the love of combination, so that he amused himself in a semi-obscure region, teeming indeed with fertile germs of better knowledge, which it remained the task of posterity to sift and to develop.

Hess had treated the evidence of miracles as necessary in regard to a part, though only a part, of the doctrine of Jesus. Some things, he thought, were cognisable by the light of reason, as carrying their own evidence, such as our obligation to virtue and our belief in its blissful results; whereas accounts of a supernatural dispensation of God for the accomplishment of salvation could only be accredited by supernatural means. Herder went farther; for him the rational and moral part of the teaching and life of Jesus was the sole essential element: Jesus was the God-man, as representing the fullest and fairest aspect of humanity; the redeeming power of his acts and sufferings consisted in the disinterested absoluteness with which he sacrificed his own life to the effort to plant a true humanity enduringly among mankind. Only what the doctrine, character, and acts of Jesus contribute to the benefit of man is, in Herder's estimate, the Gospel quintessence contained in the Gospels; miracles may have at the time been a means of recommending his person and mission to the ignorant Jewish multitude, as well as of encouragement to himself; but in this their utility is exhausted; we have nothing more to do with them; we cannot test their reality, and by trying to base the Christian religion

upon them we involve ourselves in endless difficulty. Were the miracles ever so true, repeats Herder after Lessing, still for us they are only stories of miracles ; to square them with our philosophy, to explain them from our own notions, to invent physical hypotheses to account for them, were a vain undertaking, especially considering that our conception of a miracle differs from that of earlier times. We have first artificially to place ourselves among the very different notions of the contemporaries of the teacher, whose object was to establish a higher kingdom or culture by eradicating those notions. They may be pardoned if, deeply imbued with Jewish prejudice, they thought such external aids to faith indispensable ; we, on the contrary, being enabled by the higher views derived from Jesus to obtain a more comprehensive survey of the nature of his work, are inexcusable if, in addition to the moral evidences of Christianity, we look for further proofs of its excellence. Is it necessary, asks Herder, that fire should have fallen from heaven two thousand years ago in order to enable us to see the light of the sun at this day ? Must the laws of nature have been arrested in order to convince us now of the intrinsic truth, beauty, and necessity of Christ's moral kingdom ? Let us rather thank God that this kingdom exists, and, instead of brooding over miracles, try to comprehend its true nature ; its nature itself must be its evidence to our minds, else all the miracles and prophecies ever wrought or accomplished are for us unsaid, unwrought, unprofitable.

If we further ask how Herder applied these principles to particular narratives in the Gospels, we seek in vain for any special utterances on the subject ; a few passages only afford an opportunity of guessing his true meaning. In regard to the proceedings with the possessed, for instance the legionary devils who wanted to be cast into the herd of swine, Herder tells us that Jesus, in order to reclaim the maniac, spoke to him in his own language ; the transfiguration is a vision of

the Apostles in the excited mental condition preceding the final and fatal resolve; the miracle at the baptism is a mere natural event, a softly beaming radiance from the clouds accompanied by a low muttering of thunder, which Jesus as well as the Baptist recognised as an expression of divine approval of his enterprise.

In these instances the natural explanation of miracle is suggested; elsewhere Herder tends to the symbolical. He says, Jesus performed miracles; he, elevated as he was above contemporary weaknesses, nevertheless accommodated himself to those weaknesses; but the miracles he performed were of the noblest kind; he came to the rescue of sick, erring, alienated humanity, so that the corporeal benefits which he conferred remain as typical reflections of his kindly nature, of his lofty and progressive purpose. Such is the aspect under which, to Herder's fine observation, appear more especially the miracles of the fourth Gospel; they are there not for their own sake, but as symbols of the continued miracle through which the Saviour exercises a present and constant influence over humanity. The miracle of Cana, for instance, is a type of the loftier, mightier agency distinguishing Jesus from the Baptist; the gifts and offices of the two prophets standing to one another in the same relation as purifying water to gladdening wine. So also, according to Herder, the fourth Evangelist recounts at such length the raising of Lazarus, less for the sake of the miracle as such than for its value as an illustration of the truth, that Christ is the resurrection and the life,—and also for its importance as an element of the final catastrophe, introducing the history of Christ's own revival from the dead. From this view, in which the Johannian miracles appear as illustrative symbols, it evidently requires but a slight advance to reject entirely the historical credibility of the fourth Gospel, and to treat its miraculous narratives as mere allegorical fictions; but this step Herder does not and cannot take, because a conviction of the authen-

ticity of the fourth Gospel especially is with him fundamental, and because the natural explanation of miracles appears to him a less dangerous expedient.

This latter resource he very emphatically applies to the crowning miracle of the resurrection. The answer which he gives to the question of Reimarus, Why did not the revived Jesus shew himself to his enemies as well as his friends?—namely, that he did not wish to be seized, bound, ill treated, and crucified a second time—already betrays a conception of the resurrection very different from that of the Church and of the Gospels. He, indeed, rejects the idea of the resurrection having been aided by human means; yet he lays great stress on the circumstance, assumed by him as certain, that the feet were not nailed to the cross like the hands; that the body of the resuscitated Saviour required nourishment, and was perceptible to touch, this certainly implying no phantom which could pass through closed doors. The resurrection is thus seemingly changed from a miraculous act of divine power into a natural event; but Herder reminds us that neither in the natural nor the moral order of things can anything occur independently of Almighty power; that even to suppose a mere case of suspended animation were no hindrance to our faith, which might boldly answer, Why distress myself about the means employed by God in restoring life? Enough that he returned and shewed himself to his friends; the story is truly told and is no fable or illusion. But then, we must here ask, what, after all, remains as the real history of the resurrection? Evidently in Herder's view something quite different from that of the Evangelists; for here an essential part of the existing narrative is sacrificed to the interests of historical credibility, which tolerates no miraculous interruptions of the order of natural events.



## 4. PAULUS.

In Herder's profound and comprehensive mind, the germs of two very different modes of interpreting the miraculous elements in the life of Jesus—namely, the natural, and the mythical or symbolical—were amicably united and associated. In conformity with the prevalent tone of contemporary culture, the coarser of the two methods was first developed. At the close of the last and commencement of the present century there appeared numerous writings adopting the natural explanation; the classical work based on this theory is, however, the "Gospel Commentary" of Dr. Paulus, and the subsequently issued compendium of it entitled "*Leben Jesu*."\*

For Paulus as well as for Herder the main point in Jesus is his moral superiority, his genuine humanity, and his agency in implanting this character among mankind. A glimpse of the cordial benevolence characteristic of Jesus, Paulus says, on occasion of the miracle of Cana, is far more valuable and impressive than the amazement excited by fancied demonstrations of superhuman power over nature. Herder had already given up miracles considered as anything more than unexpected results of Providential coincidences, particularly disclaiming their evidential force in establishing the truth of Christianity; Paulus, adopting the same principle from Spinoza's theologico-political treatise and the Kantian philosophy, expresses it in a still more decided and emphatic form. That no event can be considered historically credible which is not to be explained according to the laws of causation,—that it is an error to affect to recognise divine power, wisdom, and goodness in interruptions of the law of nature rather than its unbroken continuity,—that even the most astounding

\* The Commentary appeared A.D. 1800-1804. The *Leben Jesu* in 1828.

ostensible changes in nature could avail nothing in supporting a spiritual truth or proving or disproving a religious doctrine; these are axioms in whose recognition and application the Commentary of Paulus stands far above not only many contemporary, but even much more recent works of a similar kind.

It is curious to see how an inquirer armed with these fundamental axioms deals with writings which, like the Gospels as hitherto universally understood, are composed on an entirely contradictory hypothesis; works brimful of miracle and supernaturalism, and treating these very anomalies as the most conclusive evidence of the exalted dignity of Jesus and of the truth of his teaching. To reject them as unhistorical and fabulous was impossible for one who, with the rationalistic school generally, acquiesced in the common belief as to the proximity of the writers to the time and place of the occurrences. According to Paulus, the materials of Matthew's Gospel were collected in Galilee, within ten or twelve years after the death of Jesus; Luke, when with St. Paul in Jerusalem and Cæsarea, may have had personal interviews with the mother of Jesus, and obtained from her the narrative of the infancy which he prefixes to his Gospel; the Gospel of St. John, if not actually written by the Apostle, was composed by one of his disciples from the instructions, and probably the written memoranda of his master. On the supposition of the accuracy of this view of the origin of the Gospels, their narratives must be in some sort correct; while, on the other hand, assuming the truth of the theory as to the inadmissibility of miracles, there must necessarily be something wrong in them;—how is the contradiction to be reconciled?

In the first place, says Paulus, we must recollect that many of the accounts commonly deemed miraculous are really not so when candidly considered; and he thinks he perceives that precisely in the most incredible stories, the marvel is

not really in the text, but is only an interpolation of the interpreter. If the Evangelists say that Jesus walked upon the sea, that is, on the bank above the water level, why hold them responsible for the vulgar construction of walking on the sea itself? They might possibly have expressed themselves with greater clearness; but which is the more likely, an inaccurate expression on the part of a writer, or a real departure from the order of nature? So in the story of feeding the five thousand, the Evangelists say nothing as to how it was done, since Jesus had but a few loaves and fishes. The common supposition is that the food grew under the hands of Jesus; this, however, is gratuitous, and another may have an equal right to surmise that, prompted by the example of Jesus, other persons among the multitude who were provided with supplies, contributed to the abundance of the banquet so as to satisfy all. That this interpretation is the more correct, as well as the more natural one, appears from the fact that the Evangelists\* say nothing of the astonishment which would necessarily be excited by so wonderful a multiplication of the food. The critical historian has no right to make additions to his original, unless it be something which might naturally have been omitted as self-evident: but nothing can be thought self-evident except that which is natural; a supernatural interposition, if intended, would have been expressly mentioned. To this, however, it must be replied, that in a narrative like that of the Gospels, whose main subject is miracle, we are entitled to assume a preternatural cause of particular occurrences related as parts of the subject, and it is precisely because the amazement of the witnesses might be readily assumed, that the writer does not think it necessary to mention it.

But Paulus does not venture to apply this explanation to

\* The fourth Evangelist (vi. 14) certainly does report astonishment on the part of the witnesses, but that he at least attributes no great significance to such astonishment appears from ch. ii. 23, 24.—*Translator*.

the miracles generally. He admits that in many cases the parties concerned imagined they witnessed a miracle, and that the Gospel writer intended to relate one, where the historian can admit nothing but a natural event. It is indisputable, for instance, that the Evangelists speak of mad and epileptic persons as if they were possessed; but that is the construction put by them on the facts, which we must carefully distinguish from the facts themselves. The mode in which they relate the healing of these sick persons, mingles with the fact their own individual judgment as to the cause of the malady, and hence the alleged casting out of evil spirits; whereas we have to interpret the healing of this kind of sickness from psychological considerations, founded on the prevalent Jewish opinion, that evil spirits must yield to prophets, and especially to the Messiah. Paulus thinks, too, that the other cures performed by Jesus may be understood as natural events, when we eliminate the judgments mixed up with the narratives by the Evangelists. For they themselves admit the work of healing to have been no mere magical act with Jesus, but a matter of time and trouble; if, for instance, those cures where there was no bed to carry were made occasions for reproaching him with infringement of the Sabbath, they must have been connected with surgical manipulations or operations; the clay occasionally mentioned as having been made with spittle; suggests, though obscurely, the employment of natural means; and there are instances in Mark, perhaps only a few out of many which really occurred, of slow progressive cures, indicating a natural process. But then it is difficult to conceive that the eye-witnesses, and the narratives derived from them, should have so completely overlooked what was most material, namely, the nature of the means employed; and if in the account of the centurion at Capernaum, they entirely suppressed a mission of the disciples to the sick person, and so represented as a miraculous healing at a distance, what in

reality was a natural cure effected by assistants sent for the purpose, the worst suspicions are excited, and we must begin to think with Reimarus.

And yet the whole of this attempt to explain miracles, arose, as its author from his own point of view justly boasts, from anxiety to defend the Bible. He says, attempts to reduce the miraculous narratives to the natural order of cause and effect are by no means designed for the purpose of explaining them away, but rather to give credibility to what really took place, and to prevent any after-thought about minor circumstances from interfering with our confidence in essentials. When, for instance, we read that an angel of the name of Gabriel visited Mary to announce to her the maternity of the Messiah, the supernatural circumstances might easily induce us to reject the whole story as fabulous. This indiscriminate rejection of good and bad is prevented, if we learn from some sagacious commentator to distinguish fact and opinion as mingled in the Gospel narratives. We shall then dismiss the story about the angel as a supposition of Mary; but that some one visited her and made the announcement,—this, as the true essence of the story, we shall firmly retain. So that, according to the theory of Dr. Paulus, the main point in the above instance is, that some person visited Mary, that such person was the angel Gabriel being secondary; or, again, the main point in the transfiguration is, that Jesus appeared in bright radiance on Thabor or Hermon talking with two men; whether the luminosity was supernatural or an accidental reflection of the morning sun,—whether the two persons conversing with him were really Moses and Elias, or two anonymous followers,—these are mere secondary matters. But this is entirely to misrepresent the truth of the case. That which Paulus reserves in these instances as essential, the Evangelists themselves would have considered so far secondary, or rather worthless, that they would not have thought of telling the story at all under such limitations; that

which Paulus calls their opinion about the fact, constituted, in their estimation, the fact itself; the circumstances are the very essence of the story, and if the fact was not as they tell it, it did not happen at all.

Paulus indeed knows well how to make the most of the residuary fact which he retains, for example in the just cited instance of the Annunciation. Of course, he is unable to recognise the birth by the Holy Ghost, as intimated in the Gospels; he insists on viewing the fact apart from the opinions of the writer and the persons concerned. The fact he supposes to be partly negative, namely, that Joseph was not the father of Jesus; partly the positive certainty, that Mary was nevertheless pure and innocent. That she became pregnant through some spiritual influence of the Deity is an idea of her own, or of the Gospel writers, in which we cannot concur. What, then, are we to suppose? Here the unknown visitor, mistaken by Mary for the angel Gabriel, comes in very opportunely. He was a confidential person, of David's lineage, sent by the sagacious Elizabeth to her somewhat narrow-minded cousin, in order to furnish a Messiah, to whom her own darling son might act as precursor, he being incapable, as descended from the tribe of Levi, of himself assuming the higher office. For this purpose he was to play the part of angel and Holy Ghost,—no very gratifying illustration this of the method of Dr. Paulus! For here, in trying to grasp the pure fact under his guidance, we tumble right into the mire; and assuredly dross, not gold, is the issue to which his method of interpretation generally leads.

Looking from the commencement to the end of the life of Jesus, one could wish not to be obliged to say, to the prejudice of Herder, that all the monstrosities invented on this subject by Paulus, Venturini, Brenneke, &c., are no more than the consistently completed results of his suggestions. The Essenes in white garments,—to which Paulus reduces the angel apparition at the sepulchre,—might raise suspicions of

some intrigue; but Paulus follows Herder's lead in insisting that the resuscitation took place independently of any deliberate human agency, through a providentially directed, though now inexplicable, concurrence of natural causes. The death of Jesus was unreal; his body the same after resuscitation as before; requiring not nourishment only, but especially careful treatment in consequence of the ill treatment to which it had been submitted, and under which, apparently only a few weeks later, it finally succumbed.

Thus the contradiction of form and matter, of the contents of the life of Jesus, and the historical treatment of them, becomes in the hands of Paulus absolute. In excluding the supernatural elements of the original narrative, Paulus allows that the materials, as given in the originals, are incapable of historical treatment; while, on the other hand, by allowing these originals to retain their place as authentic historical records, he impliedly admits that he has failed in his undertaking. For if the Gospels are really and truly historical, it is impossible to exclude miracles from the life of Jesus; if, on the other hand, miracles are incompatible with history, then the Gospels are not really historical records.

## 5. SCHLEIERMACHER.

Schleiermacher saw quite as clearly and decidedly as either Herder or Paulus the impossibility of miracles, and the undeviating constancy of the law of nature; while, on the other hand, not even Herder so distinctly and emphatically asserted the divinity of Christ as he did. In Schleiermacher's view Christ was a man whose religious feeling—as determining his every thought and act—might be truly termed an in-dwelling of God; he was one who as an historical individual was also the type or ideal of humanity, and in whom this typical character was also truly historical.

It is well known how, in his "Glaubenslehre," Schleiermacher, in order to determine the doctrine as to Christ's person, represents the Ebionite on the one side and the Docetist on the other as the two heretical extremes, the two theological buoys or beacons, between which we have to steer the course of our thought carefully without touching either; and this he made the basis of his Lectures on the Life of Jesus.\* We have to recognise in Christ a supernatural or divine element: not indeed as a special nature distinct from the human, but only as we conceive the agency of the divine spirit to exist in the faithful Christian, namely, as an inward influence, in the case of Christ absolutely controlling his whole being; a denial of such a divine element in Christ were "Ebionitic." On the other hand, this divine element in Christ appeared and acted in the form and according to the laws of nature and of man; to deny Christ's true humanity were "Docetic."

Of these two propositions the first is substantially one with the orthodox hypothesis, as given in Church doctrine and Gospel history; the other represents the claim of science, and particularly the condition under which alone a biography of Jesus can be written. But that the two really coincide, that no inconsistency will be found in the case of Christ between the claim of science and the ideas of faith, this is no scientific inference, but only a pious assumption. This Schleiermacher well knows; he therefore suggests that in deciphering the biography of Jesus from the Gospel narratives we must keep this assumption distinctly before us as a problem, not as a matter of creed in which it is taken as affirmatively and conclusively resolved. If then we meet in

\* These hitherto unpublished Lectures lie before me in the form of an abstract, from two MS. reports prepared at the time.

[Since this note was written, a work purporting to be a report of Schleiermacher's Lectures on the Life of Jesus has been published by Rütenik; to which Dr. Strauss has just issued a detailed rejoinder.—*Translator.*]



the life of Jesus occasions in which the unmixed influences of the divinity seem absent, we must then make the hypothesis of faith bend in the Ebionitish direction; if, on the other hand, we find cases in which truly divine qualities appear, breaking through the ordinary laws of human action, the claims of science must be abandoned, and with them the historical treatment of the life of Jesus.

Now, whether we are compelled to choose between these alternatives, or, adopting the assumption of Schleiermacher, may so blend their requisitions as to produce a life of Jesus satisfying at once the demands of faith and those of science, this must depend on the fact whether the two propositions, whose concurrency is assumed by Schleiermacher, really concur in the Gospel narratives. There we certainly find one of them, namely, that which we termed the hypothesis of faith, though under a somewhat altered form. Divinity appears and acts in Christ sometimes as a moral influence, sometimes as superior insight and supernatural power, independently of any real hindrance. What Schleiermacher calls the Ebionitic view of Christ is not discoverable, with the exception of some slight traces, in our actual New Testament writings. If, on the other hand, it be asked whether the Gospel writers conceived, like Schleiermacher, the divine element in Christ as acting only according to the usual laws of man and nature, the answer must be that the idea did not occur to them. In the notion of miracle so liberally applied by them to the circumstances of Christ, a violation of those barriers is already implied; and thus arises for Schleiermacher, as for every one who concerns himself with the life of Jesus, the necessity of coming to a clear understanding about the miracles.

To dismiss miracles from the Gospel history is not his intention, for he sees clearly how intimately they are connected with the accounts, and how arbitrary was the proceeding of Paulus in trying to get rid of them. In order,

therefore, to blend the indispensable attributes of credibility and naturalness, he tries to make the conception of the natural as elastic as possible. For instance, the marvellous insight attributed to Jesus he describes as a superlative human knowledge obtained through a keen susceptibility to first impressions, and by no means as a miraculous vision of things distant; a theory not easily to be reconciled with the conversation of the Samaritaness, and entirely inconsistent with the seeing of Nathanael under the fig-tree, which was therefore taken by Schleiermacher, as by Paulus, for a natural accident. The acted miracles of Jesus consist in great measure of cures of sick persons; and here Schleiermacher is ready with an elastic formula able to comprehend nearly the whole of them within natural limits; yet without any open contradiction of the narrative, such as was implied in the medicinal expedients interpolated by Paulus. The divine power of Christ, he says, acted in these cases through the word; the word acts naturally on the mind of the hearer, this again upon his organism; and it is impossible to fix a limit of how far the influence so originated may extend. So that the cures wrought by Christ were really supernatural and miraculous, inasmuch as no one could have wrought them but one in whom, as in him, the overmastering and sole impulse was divine; yet they were also natural, because the supernatural influence attained its end through entirely natural means. All the Gospel miracles, says Schleiermacher, which are reducible to this formula, may be easily explained; those which are not so reducible will cause much difficulty. So that, however expansive the idea of the natural—and certainly Schleiermacher often carries that expansiveness to extravagant lengths—it is still inadequate, by his own admission, to comprehend all the miracles, and then his only remaining alternative, consistently with the assumption with which he started, is to leave the refractory miracles alone.

To the number of these residuary unmanageable miracles

belong especially the raisings of the dead, because, in these cases, there is no conscious being to whom the stirring words of Jesus can be supposed to be addressed. And it little avails the author to treat these instances, among which, with only a slight disguise of language, that of Lazarus is included, as mere cases of suspended animation; since even so the unconscious state of the patient leaves no opening through which the spiritual influences of Jesus can be supposed to operate. He therefore here falls back into the common natural explanation; Jesus was first to notice and announce the symptoms of continuing life. There is still more difficulty in the marvellous control over inanimate nature exhibited by Jesus; as in the narrative of the loaves and changing water into wine; here Schleiermacher makes his escape by cavilling at the document, which, by inaccurate description, makes a satisfactory judgment impossible; in similar fashion he disposes of the walking on the sea, and cursing of the fig-tree. As to the miracles of which Jesus himself was the subject, as those of the baptism and transfiguration, Schleiermacher goes hand in hand with Paulus.

Not so, however, in regard to the miraculous stories of the infancy. Greater delicacy of critical feeling and freer views as to the nature of the documents prevented Schleiermacher's following the example of Paulus in expounding poetry prosaically, or striving to force into harmony the evidently incongruous genealogies of Matthew and Luke. His confidence in the fourth Gospel, as being the authentic account of an eye-witness, made him the bolder in treating the three first Evangelists as post-apostolic compilers of older documents, not always to be relied on as strictly historical; and since John is silent as to the story of the infancy, Schleiermacher here found himself at liberty to ascribe the discrepancies between Matthew and Luke in part, at least, to the unhistorical nature of their materials. The free attitude taken by the author in regard to the miraculous commence-

ment of the life of Jesus is well known from his "Glaubenslehre;" the silence of the fourth Gospel affording an additional justification for such procedure; yet if, in this case, he hesitated not to treat the accounts of Matthew and Luke as rather poetical than historical, why, it may be asked, does he not go farther in the same direction; why, for example, in the story of the temptation, where John is equally silent, does he compromise the matter by supposing it to be some parable of Jesus, mistakenly interpreted as a history? He does however tell us, in this instance, the nature of the hindrance. He says, in the Lectures above referred to on the Life of Jesus: "To take the whole as mythical, *i.e.* as a poetical fiction "formed within the circle of Christendom, is impossible, *since* "there is no *mythus* in the *New Testament*—*mythi* are a *product* "of *ante-historic times*." But this is a mere begging of the question: why should there be no *mythi* in the New Testament? What is to be understood as *ante-historic times*? Such objections to the mythical interpretation are at once seen to be superficial; they only shew how thoroughly uncongenial that view was to Schleiermacher, how obstinately he still remained attached in his Scripture exegesis to those rationalistic conceptions from which, in regard to doctrine, he had emancipated himself.

An especially striking illustration of the same fact will be found in his treatment of the resurrection. Here he quite agrees with the natural explanation of Paulus: Jesus was not quite dead; he was recalled to life through a special providential arrangement, or rather pure accident. Certain persons happening to pass who did not know that Jesus was in the sepulchre, removed the stone, and so enabled him to come out; his being mistaken for the gardener by Mary Magdalen, arose from the fact of his having borrowed the gardener's clothes, his own being left behind in the sepulchre; and if we read that he came where the doors were shut, this implies the admission that they were before

open. That the appearances to the disciples after his resurrection were so hasty and mysterious is no proof that his re-appearance was incorporeal, since it might have been so arranged from prudential considerations to avoid exposing him to the danger of arrest. The resuscitated body would of course die, and Schleiermacher is not able to see any satisfactory proof of its supernatural removal from earth; although it may not be denied that such a mode of removal had been very appropriate in the view of tranquillising the disciples, who might otherwise have spent their time in going about seeking vainly for Jesus.\* Such are the lame issues of Schleiermacher's *Life of Jesus*; here, too, the professed object of reconciling faith and science remains unaccomplished.

The hypothesis of the Gospel writers is that divinity was the operating principle in Christ, irresistibly determining his every word and action; but it is not ours, it is not that of those who, relying on scientific experience, consider Jesus, in the full sense of the word, a man.

Our hypothesis is that the divine element in Christ can have appeared only under the form of a man, acting according to the laws of nature;—but it is not that of the New Testament writers when correctly and naturally interpreted.

It is therefore equally perverse to force upon us their conception, and to force ours upon them; it is impossible to reconcile faith with the science of to-day by any such mode of proceeding.

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## 6. HASE.

Schleiermacher's *Lectures on the Life of Christ*, have hitherto not been published with his other lectures by his

\* See an Essay of my own—on Schleiermacher's theory of the Resurrection, in Hilgenfeld's *Magazine of Scientific Theology*.

disciples.\* They promised so little support to the conservatism which became more and more dominant among Schleiermacher's followers,—were so frail a bulwark against the inroads of mythical interpretation,—in short, were so clearly the foot of clay to the polished brass of Schleiermacher's theology, that it seemed wise and prudent to suppress them. Besides, the lectures had already effected their object, since numbers of persons entertaining fundamentally similar views had crowded to hear them and disseminate their purport. In almost every treatise on the life of Jesus, down to the most recent date, we find traces of the work of Schleiermacher; he passed on this subject as well as others for an oracle; a designation which the ambiguity of his whole nature makes strictly appropriate.

Hase self-complacently calls his "Manual," first published in 1829, an essay towards a really scientific life of Jesus; contrasting with it my own work six years later in date, which he calls critically one-sided, and therefore erroneous, or at least useless. The fact is, however, that it was precisely the unscientific character of his work which especially contributed to impress upon me the necessity of writing mine; and his later editions only prove that until criticism has effected a clearance of the effete rubbish, even the finest biographical edifice stands on unsafe ground.

In Hase, as in Schleiermacher, there are elements of hesitation and contradiction, and these arise in both from the same causes; namely, uncertainty in the conception of miracle, and reliance on the fourth Gospel as the narrative of an eye-witness. Hase's real attitude in regard to miracle is, like Schleiermacher's, entirely rational; and the three first Gospels, which he considers as more or less secondary and derivative, would not in themselves have prevented him from

\* A volume has just appeared under this title, edited by Rütenik, Berlin, 1864, to which, as above mentioned, Dr. Strauss has replied at length.—*Translator*.

setting up this view in opposition to the tenor of their narratives. This however is prevented by his sentimental predilections for the fourth Gospel, that very Gospel in which the notion of miracle is sensibly extended and intensified; and hence a contradiction, which being unrecognised and unconfessed, engenders a series of compromises. The fact that the Gospel, assumed to be the most reliable, contains the most emphatic miracles, necessitates some concessions as to the possibility of their occurrence; on the other hand, since it is impossible to admit an absolutely irrational interruption of the laws of nature, it becomes necessary, when anything of the kind appears in John, to suppose a gap in his credibility.

"Perhaps," says Hase, and the word may serve as a preparative for the giddiness incidental to the frail footing afforded by his lucubrations—"perhaps all the cures of Jesus were of 'the peculiar kind in which the power of will over the body 'is often seen, though in a less marked degree,'"\* thus exactly following Schleiermacher, whom he also imitates in turning the raisings of the dead, not to be explained by his formula, into cases of suspended animation. But besides this, animal magnetism is appealed to—"that mysterious power welling "up out of the great life of nature to heal its ailments"—as offering a comparison with that manifested in Jesus. When Hase speaks of this power as a peculiar faculty in Jesus, he feels that he is jeopardising the dignity of his subject; since a physically sanative power would as little prove superior personal dignity or doctrinal truth as would exceptional bodily strength or acuteness of the senses. Hence Hase prefers to designate the miraculous endowment of Jesus as "*a clear dominion of the spirit over nature,—originally conferred upon man at his creation, and regaining its original force through the sinless purity of Jesus, to quell sickness and death; so that there is here no interruption of nature's laws, but only a restoration of her pristine har-*

\* *Leben Jesu*, Sect. 48, 4th Ed.

"*mony and order.*" Much would, doubtless, be at once gained by such an explanation; since not only the miraculous cures of Jesus, but his "despotic command over external nature" would be ranged under it, being partly conceived as the "acceleration of a natural process." But Hase does not feel himself safe in this position, as adopted by modern mystical orthodoxy, since he cannot forget that man's dominion over nature is conditioned upon knowledge and interpretation of its laws; whereas those pretended acts of authority on the part of Jesus have a magical character, which is sometimes repudiated by Jesus himself. Since, therefore, Schleiermacher's intensified power of will over body appears insufficient, while the asserted dominion of the second Adam over nature is extremely hazardous, Hase comes at last to the conclusion, that "there existed in Jesus some unknown powers, some sudden force of healing, for which many analogies may be found."\* And so, after many ineffectual efforts, right and left, the object of his search turns out to be an unknown quantity, an  $x$ , having no intelligible connection with the religious mission of Jesus; a hopelessly problematical caprice, which, after all, like the formula of Schleiermacher above considered, does not suffice to make all the miracles, as, *e.g.*, those of John, conceivable.

For instance, at the very beginning of the fourth Gospel, the "unknown powers" fail to explain the change of water into wine at Cana; and Hase, in the absence of clear ideas upon the subject, has to borrow the chicanery of Schleiermacher, and moreover adds the happy discovery that "John's" "presence with the other disciples at the scene is not clearly attested."† Here we have the novelty that a writer, generally assumed to have been eye-witness of the events related, is nevertheless only to have the credit of his imputed character in cases where his presence is specially attested. Yet,

\* Hase's Letter to Baur on the Tübingen School, p. 13.

† *Leben Jesu*, Sect. 50.



even if John happened to be absent at the marriage feast, still he must be presumed to have soon after rejoined the disciples, and must have then unavoidably heard what had occurred; and it can scarcely be credited, that "later views" and feelings induced him to change what was so told him as an ordinary event or pleasantry into a stupendous miracle. But besides this marvel peculiar to himself, John has those of the feeding the five thousand, and walking on the sea, in common with the other Evangelists; and thus at last brings the biographer denying absolute miracle, into the dilemma of having to accord to the eye-witness the implicit belief which he denies to narratives from hearsay. And yet how are we sure even in this instance that he was so? In Mark and Luke it is certainly said, just before the account of the miraculous loaves, that the twelve missionary "Apostles" had returned from their journey; but how easily may the visionary John have been tempted to stop behind, rejoining Jesus only in Capernaum or later, in which case he would not have personally witnessed those two perplexing events, and may eventually, as Evangelist, have adopted them in the form assigned to them in later legend!\* John is evidently to this class of theologians a great and general favourite, who, however, sometimes goes a little too far with his miraculous stories; and then it becomes necessary to send him out of the way in order to get rid of an inconvenient entanglement, and to be able to accept so much of his narrative as suits us, and no more.

And as the apostolic eye-witness recounts many things as to which our purely scientific biographer would gladly evade his evidence, so on the other hand he omits much which as an Apostle he must have seen, and as to which his silence is remarkable. Had the author of the fourth Gospel really seen the cases of *dæmoniacks*, of which we hear so much claiming our general confidence, from the three first Evangelists,—cases no doubt esteemed especially conclusive by

\* *Leben Jesu*, Sect. 74, 75.

the fellow-countrymen of Jesus as especially tending to establish his claims and character,—it would be indeed strange, if out of consideration for the more refined taste and education of his Greek readers, he passed over this important class of miracles in silence.\* Still stranger were it if, supposing him to be really John,—i.e. one of the more intimate apostolic circle who witnessed the agony in the garden,—he omitted this important incident merely because, after the hierarchical invocation contained in his 17th chapter, the prayer of Gethsemane “would not have contributed to the literary unity of “his work;”† for thus he would appear only as an ornamental writer, or literary artist, who may have invented one thing as easily as he suppressed another.

In dealing with the discourses attributed to Jesus in John, Hase is delicate and cautious. They are, in his opinion, “*more or less freely developed reproductions of the recollected words of Jesus,—sometimes unconsciously intermingled and modified by the disciple’s own long continued lucubrations, in which case, and especially where they are mere explanations of the Logos-theory, their historical value becomes uncertain.*” But it is so throughout; and this sometimes the author himself admits,‡ especially in the language used by Jesus as to his pre-existence, which of course is not available to the scientific biographer. But we have now a right to ask—if in regard to the discourses of the fourth Gospel, we are scarcely in a single instance sure whether we have before us, not to say the words, but even the ideas of Jesus, and not rather those of the Evangelist; if as to the events we have no assurance of John’s personal presence, except where he actually tells us he was present, and consequently is not recounting a mere subsequently collected or invented miraculous story,—we are entitled, I say, to ask in what consists the especial reliability of this Gospel? And when Hase assures us that his view of the story of the infancy as a poetical legend

\* As supposed by Hase, *Leben Jesu*, Sect. 49.

† Hase, Sect. 107.

‡ *Ibid.* 8, 65.

is no detriment whatever to the value of the apostolic testimony, since this commences only with John's baptism,\* we are again entitled to ask, How are our Gospels benefited by this testimony, if neither of the three first be the work of an Apostle, and the apostolical author of the fourth be so very incompetent a witness?

The ambiguity and inconsistency of Hase's theory is especially observable at the close of his book, where he speaks of the resurrection and ascension. First he cavils as to the reality of the death of Jesus, because only incipient putrescence or lesion of some vital organ can be a sure token of death; now the last is not proved in the case of Jesus; the former is excluded even for the orthodox, by the passage, Acts ii. 27, 31. Hase consequently affects to stand on orthodox ground with his assertion that the organic vitality of the body of Jesus was not wholly extinct;† but this is delusive and erroneous. According to the true meaning of the Gospels, as well as popular acceptation, the soul of Jesus was already severed from the body, and could not have returned to it without a miracle; according to Hase, only the external functions were suspended, and from the still unextinguished source of life within were susceptible of restoration. The same play of ambiguity surrounds the supposed cause of re-animation. "We are almost tempted to think," says Hase,‡ "that death, in the sense of violent dissolution, did not originally appertain to an immortal being, but only became "what it is through sin; he who was wholly free from sin, was "therefore also exempt from this unnatural exaggeration of "death." We already know Hase too well to take his high-sounding language seriously; his real meaning appears in the words—"It was to be expected that the wondrous healing "power which Jesus had at command should exhibit its power "in himself."§

\* Sect. 26.

† Sect. 116.

‡ Sect. 120.

§ Ibid.

Now, Hase elsewhere describes this power as a faculty or talent; and the exercise of a faculty necessarily implies the continuing life of the person endowed with it; we cannot easily conceive a faculty of self-reanimation, and must therefore understand Hase's words as intended to express that force of vitality in Jesus, which in his lifetime spread its healing influences to others, and at length appeared upon the cross as tenacity of life in himself. Yet the purely scientific biographer contents himself with less than this. "Any way," he repeats after Schleiermacher—thus giving up all he had before said—"since Jesus, without any concerted intrigue, "expected a real death, and since such death was not humanly "to be evaded, his resuscitation, however brought about, must "be considered an evident work of providence."\* In his humour of renunciation, the author might have gone a little further, and, instead of "providence," have said simply "accident;" for had the soldiers strictly executed their orders, and broken the bones of Jesus with the others, there could have been no resurrection in the sense of Hase. As to the notices in the Gospels of appearances of the resuscitated Jesus which seem unfavourable to his theory, Hase explains all those indicating a visionary or phantom nature as subjective expressions of alarm on the part of the disciples, and others, such as the non-recognition by Mary Magdalen and the disciples at Emmaus, as arising from the absence of characteristic peculiarities of feature. On the other hand, those denoting a natural humanity in the resuscitated, as a body obvious to sense and requiring nutrition, he firmly holds as objectively historical.

Just before the last event in the career of Jesus, namely, his ascension, Hase again simulates an airy exaltation in the words—"in itself it is sufficiently probable that Jesus left "this earth in some way other than the usual one."† But since he does not allow the necessity of a visible ascension,

\* Sect. 116, 120.

† Sect. 112.

treating this as a mythical expression of the idea of a return to the Father, he seemingly leaves Jesus, after all, to share the common destiny of mortals; and this, indeed, very shortly after his resuscitation, since a long sojourn in obscurity had been as inconsistent with his character as with history. Hase here forgets his former judicious remark,—that a roving invalid could hardly have appeared to the Apostles a victor over death; but such specific inquiries are unpalatable to this sort of theologians, and inopportune curiosity is finally silenced with the words—“Even the Gospel history has its “mysteries.”\* But the Gospel history tells us clearly enough that the raised Jesus ascended without death visibly or invisibly to his Father in heaven; the mystery, or rather prohibition to inquire, proceeds only from the hesitation and irresolution of those theologians who can neither believe the miraculous ascension on one hand, nor accept a simple death of Jesus on the other.

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## 7. MY OWN CRITICAL LIFE OF JESUS.

The three last-named works on the Life of Jesus, that of Paulus, the Manual of Hase, and Schleiermacher's Lectures, were the chief achievements in this department when about thirty years ago I first turned my attention to the subject. I felt satisfied with none of them; all seemed to have in some respect failed. Paulus missed the mark through dogged consistency in a wrong method; the other two marred many right views by obsequious efforts to blend the inconsistent. In all there seemed to be a general cause of failure in a mistaken view of the sources of the Gospel history. The contradiction between the supernatural accounts and the natural element which alone is historically available, could not be

\* Sect. 122.

reconciled so long as the Gospels, or even a single one of them, was taken as truly and fully historical. This indeed they could not be, for the simple reason that they contain supernaturalism; but the Lives of Jesus hitherto written had in fact been only varied attempts to eliminate this supernaturalism, or else to invest it in some sort with a natural appearance.

The object now, therefore, must be to shew that the attempt to conceal or to explain away the supernatural in the Gospel details was vain, and that consequently they were not to be claimed as strictly historical. The inference rested not only on the miraculous character of the accounts, but on their contradictions and inconsistencies, as well with general history and probability as with each other, especially when it was found that in each instance of an ostensibly supernatural occurrence it was far more difficult to conceive the event so happening than certain causes which might have originated an unhistorical account of it.

Here then was the great advantage of being at once relieved from efforts as distressing as they were fruitless to blend inconsistencies, and invest impossibilities with an air of historical credibility; but, on the other hand, there appeared a great and irreparable loss. Instead of the real Christ hitherto assumed to be represented in the Gospels, there remained nothing but a later conception of him. Instead of historically reliable details of the actual circumstances of his life, the Gospel narratives were in great measure reduced to a legendary deposit of contemporaneous Messianic ideas, the latter perhaps partially modified by his peculiar individuality, his teaching, and his fate. Of the discourses, too, of Jesus, a large portion, and especially those relating to the exalted dignity of his person in the fourth Gospel, were set aside as the artificial product of later circumstances and ideas. And thus the form of Christ which, as represented in the Gospels, had hitherto seemed to present a firm and dis-

tinct, if not a complete outline, faded away into misty obscurity.

Certainly, from this time forward, no one could any longer think of forming an image of the person and life of Jesus by a sort of mosaic combination of the individual narratives, in which the sole question should be how the different parts were to be arranged and adjusted to each other, especially how John's materials were to be fitted with those of his three predecessors. No single portion of the Gospel narrative, in its actual condition, would any longer be maintained as strictly historical; the whole had to be cast into the crucible of criticism, in order to see what after the severance of foreign and baser elements would remain as historical gold.

The consequence of this proceeding and its results, as indeed of all severe criticism, was to produce an impression of discontent at being impoverished and seemingly plundered, in being forced to admit the nonentity of many fancied possessions. To compare small things with great, there appeared here within a limited department of knowledge the same phenomenon which occurred at the time of Kant's "Critique." How wealthy and strong then seemed the Wolfian Metaphysics, and how fell a sweep was made in this rich inventory of fancied *à priori* knowledge by the Critique of Pure Reason! Men, however, refused to admit the deficit, and went on heedlessly lavishing their imaginary wealth, until bankruptcy stared them in the face. Meantime, Kant had pointed out a narrow way through which philosophy might still secure a legitimate store of reliable knowledge; his followers took the path indicated, and as far as they kept within it they found themselves rewarded. So it was in regard to the results of Gospel criticism. The majority of theologians could not bear to abandon their fancied wealth; they treated the inferences of criticism as wholly unimportant. All however that has been written on the life of Jesus from this point of view will appear as the work of mere camp followers,

and we shall find the subject to have been really advanced only by those who, contented with honest gains, pursued the narrow path pointed out by criticism.

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8. REACTION AND COMPROMISE: NEANDER, EBRARD, WEISSE, EWALD—RECENT ADDITIONAL EFFORTS: KEIM, RENAN.

Neander's "Life of Jesus Christ"\* was written expressly as an answer to my Critical Life of Jesus. The expanded title is here significant. To the human name is superadded that of the Messianic office or dignity; as if the generally rationalistic direction hitherto given to the treatment of the "Life of Jesus," as already indicated in its limited denomination and in its negative results, was now to be met by an orthodox reaction.

To Neander's "Life of Jesus Christ" are prefixed three mottos, derived respectively from Athanasius, Pascal, and Plato; all the great spirits of theology and philosophy are invoked in this latter-day tribulation, and we miss the presence only of that motto which to the merit of perfect appropriateness would have added the recommendation of its Biblical origin, namely, the saying in Mark ix. 24, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief!" In Neander the critical attack encountered an irresolute resistance, like that of a garrison half inclined to capitulate, and already under partial promise to surrender. His general position was that of sentimentality as opposed to logic, that of faith in Christ as an absolute revelation of Divinity to man; he was not, however, destitute of philosophical culture, though of a somewhat fantastic kind; and, in addition to the necessity he had felt in the course of his extensive labours in Church history to apply the resources of historical criticism, he possessed an innate truthfulness, which, though not always proof against the influences of

\* First Edition, 1837; fifth, 1852.



pious self-deception and party feeling, kept him far above the shabby tactics of those who, in order to give no advantage to their opponents, refuse to make a concession which they inwardly feel to be just. A book like Neander's "Life of Jesus Christ" made under these conditions may excite our pity; the author himself admits in the Preface that it bears "the marks of its production in an age of crisis, of isolation, of pain, and of throes."

Neander, wherever he can, leans on the "great divine," Schleiermacher; but we have already had occasion to convince ourselves how frail is this support, especially in relation to the life of Jesus; how much more likely it is to wound than to help the hand that rests upon it. A theologian of Neander's romantic turn and imaginative disposition would of course prefer the fourth before the other Gospels; and having moreover the "great divine" and generally inflexible critic on his side, he fancies his position secured against any sceptical extravagances. He treats the Evangelists generally as writing under inspiration, but an inspiration apart from their educational development as men, and regulating, not the historical, but only the religious part of their accounts; as if the historical and the religious were not indissolubly connected. Hence an eclectic procedure, whose aim is to set aside all that seems at the present day most paradoxical and offensive, in order the better to be enabled to maintain against the mythical interpretation the historical veracity of the remainder. The miracles of Jesus are brought nearer to modern conceptions by distinguishing between ordinary nature and a higher nature; also by referring to laws of nature as yet undiscovered, by means of which at some future day the miracles are to be explained; the change of water into wine at Cana was an exaltation of the natural element into a full-bodied kind of mineral water possessing vinous properties; while, in regard to the miracle of the loaves, Neander's indulgent treatment of the natural expla-

nation betrays his own strong inclination to adopt it. The same tendency is also seen in the occasional partiality for Mark intermingling with his general preference for John. Mark is often praised for being what is called "graphic;" but the real source of the satisfaction derived from him consists in the facilities seemingly afforded by his materialistic and successional description of several miracles for their natural explanation.

So irresolute an attitude gave an indisputable advantage to the critical attack; the enemy had obtained a footing within the gates of the citadel, and must soon become master of the whole. For if it was admitted as possible that Luke, left to his own resources in historical matters, gives a false reason for the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem when ascribing it to the Census, what certainty remains that he was born in Bethlehem at all? And if the essential part of the account of the ascension be merely that Christ did *not* pass through death in his removal from an earthly to a higher existence, it may be asked how can we be sure of that, if we distrust the narrative alleging the removal to have been effected by exaltation to heaven?

From this point of view it may be thought judicious in some theologians to have gone back from this sort of hesitating, unsatisfactory compromise to absolute miracle. We must either admit miracles or reject them: if we admit them we have no right to make distinctions, allowing those having some analogy with natural processes, and setting aside the rest as magical. All miracles are necessarily magical, because they imply an immediate interference of the Supreme Cause in the series of finite causes, and the resemblance to a natural process can only be ostensible and casual. Certainly where such a resemblance appears, as for instance in cases of healing, where the real transaction may be supposed to have only been a more emphatic exemplification of what is elsewhere well known as the power of mind over the morbid imagina-